

A New Missile?

Secretary McNamara's announcement of "possible" Soviet development of an orbital missile, which "could achieve an initial operational capability during 1968," imparts a somber note to the 50th anniversary of the Russian revolution. To have moved from vulnerability and weakness in 1917, to a position of threatening populations with a weapon of mass terror in 1967, all the time proclaiming a dedication to disarmament and peace, is hardly a pridesworthy progression. It is, on the contrary, moral decline.

The McNamara announcement stressed that deployment of a Soviet orbital missile would not impair the American capability to "absorb any surprise nuclear attack and to retaliate with sufficient strength to destroy the attacking nation as a viable society." Americans should be reassured to hear that from their Secretary of Defense.

But his words may be somewhat off the point. It is a shock, and a black mark against Moscow, and an affront to the American desire for peace, that the Soviet Union should perhaps be building a weapon which it has solemnly promised not to employ. The psychological effect of this development, in the United States, is bound to be a stirring of hostility toward the Soviet Union and a renewed distrust of detente.

What a tragedy it is if the Soviet Union, in 50 years of socialism, has not advanced in its understanding of how to secure a stable world peace.